

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PRS-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00 EA-06 IO-03

PM-03 DODE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 H-01 RSC-01 /048 W

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R 301813Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3720

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 25681

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT LA VN US

SUBJECT: SOUVANNA'S PLANS AND VIEWS

REF: PARIS 25559

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH SOUVANNA ON LAO POSITION ON KHMER ISSUE BEFORE THE UNGA (REFTEL) SOUVANNA ALSO DISCUSSED HIS PLANS ON HIS RETURN TO LAOS, HIS POSSIBLE RETURN TO FRANCE, AND HIS VIEWS OF GVN POLICY. ALONG THE LINES OF RECENT REMARKS TO THE PRESS, SOUVANNA EXPRESSED HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH THE CURRENT POLICY OF GVN PRESIDENT THIEU AND ADVISED A SHIFT FROM MILITARY CONFLICT TO POLITICAL COMPETITION IN BOTH SVN AND CAMBODIA. END SUMMARY.

1. SOUVANNA SAID THAT HE WILL DEFINITELY RETURN ON OCTOBER 31, ARRIVING VIENTIANE NOVEMBER 1. HE WILL REMAIN IN VIENTIANE SO LONG AS THE KING DOES FOR THE 12-MONTH FESTIVAL, MOVING TO LUANG PRABANG ABOUT NOVEMBER 15. IN LUANG PRABANG HE EXPECTS TO HAVE LESS OF A BURDEN OF BUSINESS AND FEWER VISITORS. HE WILL NEED THE CONTINUED CONVALESCENCE SINCE HE HAS RECOVERED ONLY 80 PERCENT OF HIS PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES. (QUAI DEPUTY
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DIRECTOR FOR ASIA BOLLE HAD REMARKED TO EMBOFF THAT THE

FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD LEARNED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE TESTS SHOWED THAT SOUVANNA'S RECOVERY WAS NOT AS GOOD AS HAD BEEN HOPED.) SOUVANNA NOTED THAT THE LAO SOLUTION HAD BORNE UP WELL DURING HIS ABSENCE, AND HIS PROLONGATION OF HIS CONVALESCENCE IN LUANG PRABANG SHOULD NOT RUFFLE THE VIENTIANE POLITICAL SCENE.

2. SOUVANNA SAID THAT HE THOUGHT HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT RETURN TO FRANCE AGAIN FOR ABOUT A YEAR. HOWEVER, PRIVATE BUSINESS MIGHT REQUIRE HIS RETURN IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY. THERE WAS ALSO THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT RETURN TO FINISH THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE STATUS OF LAO IN FRANCE, A NEW AGREEMENT TO REPLACE THE ONE HE SIGNED IN 1953 WITH PRESIDENT LANIEL WHICH ACCORDED LAO THE PRIVILEGES OF FRENCH IN FRANCE. THE SALE OF LAO PASSPORTS TO CHINESE, VIETNAMESE AND THAI HAD PERMITTED ABUSES WHICH THE FRENCH WERE NO LONGER PREPARED TO ACCEPT.

3. WHEN WE BROACHED THE QUESTION OF SUPPORT FOR FRIENDLY RESOLUTION ON CAMBODIA (REFTEL), SOUVANNA VOLUNTEERED THAT THE GVN SHOULD ADOPT A POSTURE OF CONCILIATION LIKE THAT OF THE GKR. HE SAID THAT HE HAD LONG BEEN OPPOSED TO THIEU'S POLICY OF TRYING TO EXTERMINATE THE COMMUNISTS. SOUVANNA NOTED THAT THIEU COULD HARDLY HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT THE FRENCH AND AMERICANS HAD FAILED TO DO. BECAUSE OF HIS OPPOSITION TO THIEU'S POLICY, HE HAD ALWAYS REFUSED TO GO TO SAIGON. HE THOUGHT THAT THIEU SHOULD ACCEPT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE THIRD COMPONENT WHICH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 25681

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COULD SERVE AS AN INTERMEDIARY WITH THOSE WHO ARE NOT
HARDLINERS IN THE PRG. HE ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE
"LES DURS" IN THE PRG AS THERE WERE IN THE LAO PATRIOTIC
FRONT (LPF), BUT ONE COULD FIND NATIONALISTS AS WELL.
SOUVANNA SUGGESTED THAT SENATOR VU VAN MAO, GENERAL BIG
MINH AND SOME OF THE 2,000 EXILES IN THE US AND FRANCE
COULD PERHAPS WORK OUT SOMETHING TO HELP THE GVN IF THEY
WERE PERMITTED TO WORK TOGETHER--IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY ARE
NOT RPT NOT NOW A "THIRD FORCE." SOUVANNA NOTED THAT NEITHER
THE KHMER NOR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE SHOULD BE AFRAID TO
SHIFT THE STRUGGLE FROM MILITARY CONFLICT TO POLITICAL
COMPETITION. ALREADY IN VIENTIANE ONE HAD SEEN THE
TRANSFORMATION OF THE LPF SOLDIERS WHEN EXPOSED TO THE
LAO SOCIETY OF THE CITIES; THEY HAD BECOME PROGRESSIVELY
MORE LAO THROUGH SYMBIOSIS, LIVING WITH THE TRUE LAO
NATIONALISTS. THE KHMER AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE SHOULD NOT
BE AFRAID OF SUCH COMPETITION.

4. SOUVANNA ADMITTED THAT HE WAS IN A SLIGHTLY PRIVI-
LEGED POSITION SINCE HE HAD ALWAYS MAINTAINED RELATIONS
WITH THE DRV AND PRC AND HAD NEVER EXPELLED THE LPF FROM
HIS GOVERNMENT OR FROM VIENTIANE. HE HAD
ALSO RETAINED GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH PHAM VAN
DONG WHO HAD SENT HIM FLOWERS AND A LETTER AND EVEN A
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MEDICAL EMISSARY, DR. THON THAT TUNG. NONETHELESS, THE
KHMER AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE, DESPITE SOME DISADVANTAGES
SHOULD EMBARK ON THE ROAD OF CONCILIATION.

5. COMMENT: SOUVANNA APPEARED TIRED, BUT BASICALLY
IN GOOD FORM. HE SEEMED CLEARLY AWARE OF HIS PHYSICAL
AND MENTAL LIMITATIONS AS A RESULT OF HIS ILLNESS AND
ITS TREATMENT; HE NOTED THAT HE WAS TIRED AFTER HIS
DAILY WALK OF ONE KILOMETER. HE PUT PARTICULAR EMPHASIS
ON THE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF THE PGNU DURING HIS
CONVALESCENCE, AND HE MAY UNDERESTIMATE THE NUMBER AND
SEVERITY OF THE DISPUTES BEING HELD IN ABEYANCE AWAITING
HIS RETURN.
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